

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: GIBSON BARBOZA'S IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO CITY MEETING

1. I PURPOSELY DELAYED THE DELIVERY OF THE SECRETARY'S LETTER OF MARCH 1 UNTIL MARCH 4 SO THAT I COULD OBTAIN FROM GIBSON BARBOZA (WHO HAD BEEN TIED UP ON FEBRUARY 28 AND MARCH 1 WITH THE BRIEFING OF HIS SUCCESSOR) HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE MEXICO CITY MEETING.
 2. CONCERNING THE SECRETARY'S LETTER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT, AFTER "PONDERING" IT, HE WOULD REPLY, PERHAPS AT SOME LENGTH, BECAUSE HE HAD SOME THINGS HE WANTED TO SAY AND BECAUSE THE RESPONSE WOULD PROBABLY REPRESENT HIS LAST OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE SECRETARY.
 3. WHEN I ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS ESTIMATE OF THE MEXICO CITY MEETING, GIBSON IMMEDIATELY LAUNCHED INTO A GLOWING ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING IN TERMS OF ITS USEFULNESS AND ITS PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE AND AN UNRESTRAINED AND DEEPLY SINCERE PANEGYRIC TO THE SECRETARY AND HIS PERFORMANCE.
 4. WITH RESPECT TO THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING, GIBSON BARBOZA, NOTING THAT I WOULD REMEMBER HIS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE BEFORE THE MEETING, SAID THAT HE WAS DELIGHTED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HE HAD BEEN COMPLETELY WRONG; THE MEETING HAD BEEN A COMPLETE SUCCESS DESPITE THE FACT THAT THERE WERE NO "SOLUTIONS" REACHED. NOTING THAT THE MEETING HAD NOT
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BEEN WELL ORGANIZED, HE SAID THAT IN RETROSPECT HE BELIEVED THAT PARADOXICALLY THE VERY DISORGANIZATION HAD

PROBABLY HELPED MAKE IT A SUCCESS. HE COMMENTED THAT THE FLEXIBILITY AND GOOD INTENTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES HAD BEEN EVIDENT AND CONVINCING AND THAT THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND THAT THE "NEW DIALOGUE" WAS WELL BEGUN. HE SAID, WITH RESPECT TO THE UNITED STATES POSITIONS, THAT HIS ONLY CONCERN WAS WHETHER THE SECRETARY WOULD OUTRUN THE BUREAUCRACY, INDICATING THAT HIS PRINCIPAL WORRY WAS THE "ECONOMIC BUREAUCRACY."

5. ELABORATING ON HIS CONVICTION THAT THE "NEW DIALOGUE" AND THE NEW STYLE OF INTER-AMERICAN MEETINGS WAS TAKING ROOT, GIBSON BARBOZA COMMENTED THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS EXPERIENCE, THE LATIN AMERICANS HAD ENGAGED, IN MEXICO CITY, IN A TRUE DEBATE, SO MUCH A PART OF NORTH AMERICAN UPBRINGING AND SO ALIEN TO LATIN AMERICANS GROUNDED IN CARTESIAN PRINCIPLES. MOREOVER, HE SAID, THE LATIN AMERICANS HAD ENJOYED IT AND HAD PROFITED FROM IT. HE WENT ON TO EXPRESS THE BELIEF THAT AT THE SAME TIME, THE SECRETARY HAD HAD AN EDUCATION FROM THE LATIN AMERICANS, WITH THE RESULT BEING A PROCESS OF MUTUAL INSTRUCTION. HE SAID THAT EVERYONE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE ATLANTA MEETINGS.

6. I ASKED GIBSON BARBOZA WHETHER THERE HAD REALLY BEEN, AS PRESS ACCOUNTS HAD STATED, A MISINTERPRETATION BY THE LATIN AMERICAN MINISTERS OF THE "COMMUNITY" CONCEPT AS AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE A POLITICAL BLOC. HE REPLIED THAT THE MEANING OF THE IDEA HAD NOT BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD OR MISINTERPRETED AND IN SAYING THAT HE WAS SPEAKING NOT ONLY FOR HIMSELF BUT ALSO FOR "ALL THE OTHERS."

7. GIBSON BARBOZA SAID, WITHOUT ELABORATION, THAT ON BILATERAL MATTERS HE HAD BEEN VERY SATISFIED WITH HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SECRETARY.

8. WHEN HE SPOKE OF THE SECRETARY AND HIS PERFORMANCE, GIBSON WAS LYRICAL. HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT PRAISE THE SECRETARY TOO HIGHLY, AND WORDS LIKE "MASTERFUL," "PERFECT," "BRILLIANT," AND "INCREDIBLE" WERE SHOT
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THROUGH HIS REMARKS. "HENRY," THE MINISTER SAID, "CONQUERED EVERYONE, SEDUCED EVERYONE." DESCRIBING THE HOUR-LONG STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY ON THE TWO US AGENDA ITEMS, GIBSON SAID THAT IN ALL HIS EXPERIENCE HE HAD NEVER WITNESSED A PERFORMANCE SO MASTERFUL. HE SUMMED IT UP BY STATING THAT THAT ONE HOUR HAD BEEN IN ITSELF WORTH THE TRIP TO MEXICO. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD STAND BY THAT DESCRIPTION IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT, OF COURSE, THERE HAD BEEN HOLES IN THE BRILLIANT PRESENTATION OF THE TWO ITEMS. HERE HE CITED PARTICULARLY THE SECRETARY'S

EMPHASIS ON THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF THE CRISIS AND, IN THIS CONTEXT, THE ABILITY OF THE UNITED STATES TO ABSORB THOSE EFFECTS. GIBSON ARGUED THAT, WHILE IT WAS TRUE THAT THE UNITED STATES COULD OVERCOME THE ECONOMIC IMPACT, THE SECRETARY HAD NOT ADDRESSED IN HIS REMARKS, ALTHOUGH OF COURSE HE UNDERSTOOD THEM BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE, THE DRAMATIC, UNSETTLING EFFECTS IN TERMS OF POWER.

9. GIBSON BARBOZA ALSO TOLD ME THAT, CONCERNING HIS OWN FUTURE, HE SIMPLY HAD NOT YET DECIDED WHICH FORK OF THE ROAD HE WOULD BE TAKING. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE PROBABLY WOULD REJOIN THE RANKS (AS AN AMBASSADOR) BUT THAT HE WANTED TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY, DURING THE REST HE WOULD BE TAKING AFTER THE INAUGURATION, THE POLITICAL OPTIONS OPEN TO HIM. (HERE HE WAS CERTAINLY REFERRING TO HIS POSSIBLE CANDIDACY FOR GOVERNOR OF PERNAMBUCO, HIS HOME STATE, WHICH WOU
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